



LIFE IN THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT

Buddhism pays attention on every life whether they are human beings, animals or other kinds of living things. Above all, human beings are the most important than the others, as they have an ability to develop their life to reach the highest point of life by following the right ways of life. Buddha spent his whole life to teach others, in order to release them from suffering. Studying the Buddha's teaching is to study about the meaning of life and to study the way of life.

This article studies about life, the concept of life, the element of life and the purpose of life by doing the research from *Tipitaka* which is the main doctrine of Buddhism, and other books which are written by acceptable people in the academic society.

The research found that Buddhism mentioned about lives not only human beings but also other living things in this world and others. According to the Buddhism's view, there are four kinds of lives. There are Lives rise up from eggs, from wombs, from sewages and fairies and hell creatures' lives. All lives are unstable and changing all the time. The highest purpose of life is attaining to *Nippāna* (State which has no sin).

1. INTRODUCTION:

Buddhism describes about many kinds of living things, not only the living things in this world but also in other worlds. Buddhism talks about living things in different kinds by referring the difference of physical bodies, mental statements, foods, and other factors such as the weather and heredity, causing all the living things to be different from each other.

As there are different kinds of living things, many questions are organized by educators, religious, and general interested people. There are some questions as in **what is life? What is the difference of life? And what is the purpose of life?**

This article follows those questions that have been mentioned above and studies about the living things in Buddhism by doing the research in *Tipitaka* (Common Buddhist Text), Commentaries and other books which show the information about life, and the views of knowledgeable people who are widely accepted in the academic societies.

The study about the living things in Buddhism is the study about Buddha's teaching especially, the study about the life of human being and the concept, evolution and purpose of life whether it is the basic purpose, middle purpose and highest purpose.

The study about the living things in Buddhism is an important topic in order to understand the meanings, configurations, descriptions and purposes of life. Moreover, to study about the principle of living together in case of honoring, adoration and avoiding from violence is also necessary and cannot be ignored.

2. OBJECTIVES:

- To study about the life in Buddhism
- To study about the concept of arising of life in Buddhism
- To study about the purpose of life in Buddhism

3. DEFINITIONS:

This article is the study about the life in Buddhism. The study is a collection of all information from *Tipitaka* (Buddhist Common Text), and *Tipitaka's Commentaries* and other books which are related to living things; thereby composing all the data together following the outline of this article.

4. GENERAL VIEW OF LIFE:

Payuodo Phikkhu has written about the life in this book : **Buddhadhamma**: that life consists of Five Aggregates (*Pañca-Khandhā*). There are : *Rūpa*: body, all material constituents, *Vedanā*: feeling, *Sañña*: perception, *Sankhārā*: mental formations, and *Viññāna*: consciousness. These aggregates are composed together which makes life occurring. Normally, life means the daily being. Commonly, even though people do not consider about each path of five aggregates but it is always being and supporting the life.

Paññānanda Phikku has mentioned about the view of life in the book : **Common life**: that life looks like flowers which are falling from its tree and they will be neglected at the end. There is nothing to be the substance of life. Life is being

for a short time and dies, no matter for life that can be hold as a permanent thing.

Phra Brhompanit has written about life in the book: **Karma and Reborn**: that life is the religion. If people believe in religions, they can use the religions to be the way of life.

Even, each one has a different view of life depending on their own viewpoints. Normally, standpoint of each one regarding to the life often depends on religions, doctrines and opinions that they are holding. Life has many different meanings as mentioned above but lastly life is the development of its own ability and the attempt to get to the destination of life and devote oneself to be the benefit for others.

5. THE NATURAL LAW OF THE ARISING OF LIVES:

The concept of the arising of lives in Buddhism whether they are human beings, fairies, animals or other kinds of living things is the process of the nature. According to the perspective of Buddhism, all living things exist, remain and pass away following the natural law which is called *Niyāma* (The natural law of the arising of living things). Buddhism mentions about the method of the arising of living things in *Dhīghanikāya Mahāvagga*. There are of five kinds. Namely:

1. **Utu-Niyāma**: The method of arising of physical organic order, biological laws including all environments such as temperature, seasons and other factors that are the cause of identification of physical bodies.
2. **Bīja-Niyāma**: The method of arising of physical organic order, biological laws including reproduction and specialty of heredity.
3. **Citta-Niyāma**: The method of arising of psychic law, connection of statement and relation of energy of mind.
4. **Kamma-Niyāma**: The method of action and result. The law of *Kamma* or moral laws.
5. **Dhamma-Niyāma**: The method of the natural laws of cause and effect. The method of factors which arise by supporting of each other.

These methods are the law of the arising of all living things. On the other hand, all the living things are considered to be under these five methods, to be related with these five methods. So, these are the common rules of the arising of all living creatures in Buddhism.

6. TYPES OF LIVING THINGS IN BUDDHISM:

Buddhism divides the varieties and differences of living things. All the living things rise up under the five natural laws as have been mentioned above. In accordance with the method of Buddhism, the living things can be divided into four kinds called the types of birth (*Yoni*). As following:

1. **Jalābujā-Yoni**: Living things rise up in wombs such as human being, monkeys, cows, dogs and cat, etc.
2. **Aṇḍajā-Yoni**: Living things firstly rise up in eggs. These kinds of living

things are spawned from eggs and come out from eggs to be a life such as hens, ducks, birds, snakes, etc.

3. **Samsedaja-Yoni:** Living things rise up in sewages and growing up in that sewages such as worms and germs, etc.
4. **Opapātika -Yoni:** Spontaneously living things which rise up and grow up suddenly. In the same way, at the arrival of time to die, they also suddenly vanish from their existence, such as fairies and hell creatures.

All the living things are different from each other with ages, physical bodies, and foods. Even though, there are differences among them but according to Buddhism view, they are the same case that is all living things are in case of variation in arising, remaining and disintegration. All the living things are unstable and facing disintegration all the time.

Buddhism talks about the living things in different kinds. The most important kind of those living creatures is human being. The main reason of the arising of Buddhism is that to resolve the problem of human being by letting them realize oneself because human being has an ability to develop oneself to be away from suffering which is considered to be a big problem of human being and to reach to his own destination in the case of moral progress by practicing and following Buddha's teachings.

In contradiction, other kinds of living things such as plants, creatures, germs or even divinities have no abilities to develop themselves in moral development. Accordingly, Buddhism looks at them in un-having abilities as human being has in this aspect. However, Buddhism has a good attitude on them in the case of love and mercy, in order to let all the living things to stay together peacefully and develop themselves along with its own ways.

7. THE CONCEPT OF THE ARISING OF LIFE:

Buddhism talks about the causes of the arising and the concept of life in orderly method. According to the messages in *Tanahākhayasutta*, there are three basic causes of the arising of life. These consisted of:-

1. Mother and father stay together, means they have sexual relations.
2. Mother is on a period and ready to have a pregnancy.
3. Having a spirit comes to be born.

These three kinds of elements are the fundamental, important cause of the arising of life into this world. Without any of these three kinds, life cannot be occurred. These elements move on step by step as it has been mentioned below.

When a life has been arisen in the womb of a mother, the evolutionary progress of the life will be started respectively. As the messages showed in *Saṅgyuttanikāyā sgathāvagga* : In the first week, the life is called *Kalala*, it looks the same as a small drop of sesame oil and it cannot be seen with naked eyes. After a week, it is called *Upputha*, it looks the same as water which is used for washing meet. After a week more, it changes to be the same as a liquid tin and being bigger as a grain of sugar called *Pesi*. A week later, it changes to be a piece of meat and being bigger same as a chicken's egg, it is called *Ghana*. In the week of five, it is called *Pancasākhā* or five lumps that consisted of a head, two hands and two legs. In the week of seven, hair and nails arise and the life grows up respectively. While the life is in the womb, the consumption of food comes from its mother through the navel pipe. Around ten months later the infant is born into this world.

8. THE ELEMENTS OF LIFE:

According to Buddhism, life rises up from five aggregates which are called *Pāncakhanthā*. Therefore, since these five elements are combined together, the arising of life has been occurred. These are five elements:

1. **Rūpa:** The physical element including matter of energy and all qualities of body.
2. **Vetanā:** The mental element such as feeling of suffering, happiness and non-suffering or unhappiness arising from five senses including mental sense.
3. **Sañña:** The perception of six senses including understanding objects such as white, green, black, red, etc.
4. **Saṅkhāra:** Mental formations that consist of intention to be bad, good or middle.
5. **Viññāṇa:** Consciousness or knowing objects through six senses. These are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, physical touching and mentally touching.

Life occurs from the composition of these five aggregates. Life can be divided in two parts like a physical body and a mental statement. As both of them work together, human being can be alive. Human being is not able to be alive or sup-

ports oneself without any of them. The supposition that this is a human being, this is a creature and so on. It is legislated from the composition of five aggregates. When the division of five aggregates is made, human being or other creatures cannot be found as what is a human being or which part of the body is a human being. Finally, one cannot find any part of them to define that what is a human being or what is a living creature. This case is in accordance with the word of *Nāgasena Phikhu* who was asked and gave a metaphor to *Milinda King* which is named as a car because of the composition of all elements. When the elements are divided, the car cannot be found any more.

9. THE TRUTH OF LIFE (The Three Characteristics of Existence):

All living things are in the same case that is being an inaccuracy or unsteadiness and facing a variation all the time. Life is unstable and is not permanent. Life is traveling in a cycle of birth and death. Not only human being but also fairies, gods and Phramma are in the same case that they are facing the three characteristics of existence which is called *Tilakkhaṇa* (The three characteristics of existences) means the simple character of lives. These are:

1. **Aniccata:** An impermanence, uncertainty and unexpected thing means anything has happened, will be vanished at the end.
2. **Dukkhatā :** Being oppressed, means the factor of changing that makes everything cannot be permanent or perfect. They are imperfect in themselves.
3. **Anattā:** Soullessness or state of being not self, means everything occurs from five elements that can be called as beings or lives, but in fact these things cannot be found in the permanent self. When all the elements of life are divided, the certain life cannot be found.

These three characteristics are a common rule for all living things, not only human being but also other kinds of living things, facing with such these three characteristics. It is to say that all things occur, remain and pass away and there is nothing in the circle of birth being permanent.

10. THE PURPOSE OF LIFE:

According to the teachings of Buddha, the purpose of life is divided into three levels. It is consisted of the purpose of the current life, the purpose of the next life and the purpose of extra life or the purpose of ultimate life. There are three levels of the objective of life:-

10.1 The elementary purpose:

The common purpose of life is being successful and happy in current life such as having a stable job, being able about the arrangement of properties, doing the legal works, non-breaking the laws, customs, tradition and attempt to be successful in his own life such as a farmer attempts to be successful in his works, a merchant or a business man attempts to get to his own target and other professions are in the same way. On the other hand, being good, having positions, being respected and being loved by other people are also a kind of the purpose of current life. This is the elementary purpose of life.

The rule of being successful:

Buddha talked about the principle of being successful in current life which is called *Diṭṭhadhammikathā*: means the obtainable benefits here and now, means the principle for being successful in the current life. These are four kinds. Namely:

1. **Uṭṭhānasampadā:** To be diligent and wise in his own works and to do the legal works, being professional at his own works, being wise to solve problems and reform it to be better in order to make it reach to the destination as one own wishes.
2. **Ārakkhasampadā:** To know watchfulness on the properties which are difficultly collected by his own effort, means considering about necessary and unnecessary things that oneself should spend for or not, to try to save the properties not to squander it for unwholesome things.
3. **Kalyāṇamittatā:** To have good companies or association with good people means having good friends who can give advices for the good things, having good people who can lead oneself to the achievement for the wholesome things in his own life.
4. **Samajvītā:** Living economically, means to know that what is necessary or unnecessary for spending, do not be extravagant and spending for appropriate life.

These are four kinds of the rules or the principle for surviving by using these ways of life to earn money and to manage the earned money in order to use it as the wholesome things. By this way, happiness will be occurred to oneself. On the other hand, Buddha taught his followers in many particular principles such as the principle for successfulness, love, goodness and so on. One can follow the way which he prefers. All the teaching of Buddha has a destination at being happy in life.

10.2 The middle purpose

The middle purpose means the result of the action which can be the wholesome thing in the present life and connects to future life or extra life by doing the goodness in this life and affect to the next life. According to the Buddha's teaching, one will rise up in heaven or hell after death depending on his own action in the present life. One who does good things in the current life will be born in the heaven, on the contrary, one who does bad things in this life will be born in the hell in the next life. The birth of the human being is related to his own action, called Karma, as the words of Buddha found in *Cūḷakammaviphaṅgasutta*, These are:

1. Having a short age because of killing.
2. Having a long age because of un-killing.
3. Having an affliction because of persecution.
4. Un-having an affliction because of harmlessness.
5. Being a beautiful person because of anger.
6. Being an unbeautiful person because of kindness.
7. Having less power because of jealousy.
8. Having much power because of non-jealousy.
9. Having less property because of being stingy.
10. Having much property because of donation.
11. Birth in low caste because of being conceit.
12. Birth in high caste because of being respected.
13. Being sage because of communication with philosophers.
14. Being silly because of non-communication with philosophers.

Accordingly, the action which insisted of intention in present life can be affected to the next life. On the other hand, it can be said that the present life is affected from previous life or action. Thereby, Buddhism emphasizes a current life especially what one does with an intention which will be affected in the current and future life.

The rule for practicing in the present life:

The fundamental principle for practicing Buddhism in present life is precepts which called *Pāñcasīla* (Five precepts or the rule of morality). This is a common rule for not only all Buddhist but all people as well.

There consisted of:-

1. **Pānātipātā:** To abstain from killing, harmfulness, violence and persecution.
2. **Aññātānā:** To abstain from what is not given, being a thief or cheating others.
3. **Kāmesumiccācārā:** To abstain from sexual misconduct with other's wives or husbands.
4. **Musāvātā:** To abstain from false speech.
5. **Surāmerāyamuḍḍamādāṭṭhānā:** To abstain from intoxicants heedlessness.

These are called Five Precepts which are the basic principle of Buddhism. By practicing these methods, people can be happy or stay happily not only in this world but also in the next life as the summary of the end of Precept (Sīla) that one will be born in the heaven because of Sīla, will be wealthy because of Sīla, will be attained to *Nippāna* (The ultimate purpose of Buddhism) because of Sīla.

10.3 The ultimate purpose:

The highest purpose of life in Buddhism is attaining *Nippāna* or to be free from suffering that means having no sensuality or sin in the mind, having only the real happiness. This is called reaching the aim of Buddhism, in accordance with the Buddha's word, that is *Nippānam Paramam Sukham* Pipāna is a supreme happiness. The way to get to the highest happiness (Nippāna) in Buddhism is to practice following the Buddha's teaching.

The rule for reaching the highest purpose

All the sermons of Lord Buddha are supported to each others to reach the destination of life, such as : *Dāna* (giving) supports *Sīla* (precept) and *Sīla* supports *Pāvanā*. All these Dhammas are the basic way of practicing but for the direct way to reach to Nipāna is called the Noble Eightfold Path or Eight Ways, consisted of:

1. **Sammādiṭṭhi:** Right View or Right Understanding of doing a bad thing, such a bad thing will return, doing a good thing, such a good thing will return and try to do only good things.
2. **Sammāsaṅkappa:** Right Taught or Right Considering means the taught without greed, anger and delusion.
3. **Sammāvācā:** Right Speech means the speech without telling lie, telling impolite words, telling instigated words and telling untrue words.
4. **Sammākāmmanta:** Right Action means the action without killing, taking un-given things and sexual misconduct.
5. **Sammājīva:** Right Livinghood means having legal and moral jobs, and living without any kind of wrongful occupations.
6. **Sammāyāma:** Right Effort means the attempt of protecting sin from the mind and trying to make a goodness which occurs in the mind.
7. **Sammāsati:** Right Mindfulness means to know about the current situation. In the case of practicing, it means *Satipaṭṭhana* (Foundation of mindfulness)
8. **Sammāsamādhi:** Right Concentration means to concentrate on a good point that means practicing to follow the foundation of mindfulness.

This is the way of practicing to get to the highest purpose of life that is called *Nippāna* (The state of ending sufferings). In addition, the way of practicing as has been mentioned above, all the levels whether the way of practicing for the present life, next life and ultimate life have to connect together. It is to say, what has done in the present will be affected in the future as well. Therefore, Buddhism pays attention on action in the present life and emphasizes that one should practice a mindfulness in order to realize oneself all the time.

11. SUMMARY:

Having studied, the research found that:

A life rises up from three elements, consisted of, 1), a father and a mother have sexual relation 2), the mother is on a period and ready to have a baby and 3), having a spirit comes into to be born in the pregnancy.

A life consisted of five aggregates (*Pañcakkhandhā*) these are :- *Rūpa* : physical body, *Vedanā*: feeling, *Saññā*: perception, *Saṅkhārā*: mental formations, and *Viññāna*: consciousness.

A life is not permanent and it is changing all the time, engaging with three characteristics, it is an impermanence, a state of suffering and a soullessness. It is visible due to the assembling of the five aggregates. When all elements are divided, the real appearance cannot be found.

There are three levels of the purpose of life. As follows:

1. The basic purpose of life is an achievement in the present life such as being successful in business, studies or works.
2. The middle purpose of life is good actions which can bring happiness to the present life and to extra life by practicing *Dhamma*.
3. The highest purpose of life is the ending of sufferings or being free from sins called *Nippāna*.

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